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PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES AND PLANNING

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In response to General Assembly resolution 47/214 of 23 December 1992, the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly, at its forty-eighth session, a report suggesting possible new approaches to programme planning (A/48/277). The proposal for reform was based on the view that the current medium-term plan had not functioned effectively as a policy-level tool for programming at the programme and subprogramme level.

2. In April 1993, the Secretary-General had convened an ad hoc technical seminar of experts on programme planning in the United Nations. The participants made several proposals for reform. The main proposal was to replace the current "Introduction" to the Plan with a "Perspective" document which would deal with the role and direction of the work of the Organization. In the report of the Secretary-General (A/48/277), it was stated that:

> "The main purpose of this 'Perspective' document would be to provide a shared perception of the challenges and problems that would need to be addressed by the international community, the role of the Organization in this undertaking and the commitment of the Member States to work together and seek solutions in the realization of the objectives and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations" (para. 13),

and that:

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* E/CN.3/1994/1.

"Taking into account existing mandates, the 'Perspective' should be forward-looking and should inspire Member States to seek solutions to the problems and challenges ahead; it should contain broad directions for United Nations action, taking into account the distribution of competence in the United Nations system. In view of its nature and purpose, the 'Perspective' should not contain indications of resources or priorities or refer too specifically to sectoral strategies" (para. 15).

3. The proposal also envisaged that a second document, containing a list of major programmes with some programmatic structure, would be annexed to the "Perspective" document in order to provide a framework for programme planning. The annexed document would define the nature of and period to be covered by the medium-term plan on programme of work (providing level of detail and relationship with the budget outline and the programme budget), specify whether the programme budget would be annual or biennial and indicate the relationship with performance reporting and evaluation.

4. In line with the above recommendations, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its forty-ninth session, a prototype of a new format of the medium-term plan.

5. In the light of the above and since there has been no change in the programme of work for statistics, the Secretary-General does not plan to propose additional revisions to the present medium-term plan in statistics.*

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* Consequently the conference room paper (E/CN.3/1994/CRP.1) listed in the agenda under the present item will not be issued.